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I.—*Account of a Visit to the Ruins of Simroun, once the capital of the Mithila province.* By B. H. HODGSON, Esq. Resident in Nipal.

[In a letter to the Editor.]

I TRUST that the drawings and inscriptions lately sent you from Bákra, Mathiah, Rádhiáh, and Késariah, will serve to draw attention towards the remains of Hindu science and power still extant in this direction—the Mithila, or Maithila Dèsa of the Sástras, and North Bihár of the Moghuls. But it is not merely on the British side of the boundary that these astonishing traces of ancient civilization exist; for, in the Nipalese Taraï, also within a few miles of the hills, where now (or recently) the tiger, wild boar, and wild buffalo usurp the soil, and a deadly malaria infects the atmosphere for three-fourths of the year, similar vestiges are to be found. The Nipalese Taraï is synonymous amongst Europeans with pestilential jungle. It was in the halls of Janakpur, however, that the youthful RÁMA sought a bride: it was from the battlements of Simroun that the last of the Déva dynasty defied so long the imperial arms of TOGLAK SHÁH!

But the ruins of Janakpur and of Simroun *still exist* in the Nipalese low-lands: and he who would form a just idea of what the Hindus of Mithila achieved prior to the advent of the Moslems must bend his pilgrim steps from the columns of Rádhiáh and of Mathiah, in the British territories, to the last but still astonishing vestiges of the cities of King's JANAKA and NÁNYUPA, in those of Nipal.

Of the Nipalese Taraï it might justly be said, until very lately,

‘A goodly place it was in days of yore,

But something ails it now: the place is cursed.’

Five centuries of incessant struggle between Moslem bigotry and Hindu retaliation had indeed stricken this border land with the

double curse of waste and pestilence. Nature, as it were, in very scorn of the vile passions of man, having turned the matchless luxuriance of the soil and climate into the means of debarring his future access! Such *was* the Nipalese Taraï until 1816. But since that period the peace and alliance existing between the two efficient Governments of the hills and the plains have given security to the borders, and man is now fast resuming his ancient tenure of this fertile region. Still, however, there is little temptation or opportunity for Europeans to enter it; and as chance recently conducted me past the ruins of Simroun, I purpose to give you a hasty sketch of what I saw and heard; because these ruins are evidently *disjecta membra* of the same magnificent body to which the mausoleum of Késriah, and the solitary columns of Mathiah, of Rádhiyah, and of Bakhra belong. About 15 miles from the base of the hills, and at a nearly equal distance from the Bágmaty, south of the former, and west of the latter, stand the remains of Simroun, in the Nipalese district of Rotahat, and opposite to the Champarun division of the British zillah of Sárún.

The boundary of Nèpal and of our territories confines the ruins to the south, and the Jamuni Nadí to the west. On the *immediate* east lies the village of Kachorwa, and on the north, that of Bhagwánpur, both belonging to Nèpal. Here, in the midst of a dense jungle, 12 miles probably in circuit, rife with malaria, and abounding in tigers, wild boar, and spotted axis, are secluded these wonderful traces of the olden time. The country around is well cultivated *now*, both on our and the Nipalese side, but no one presumes to disturb the slumber of the genius of Simroun; superstition broods over the tainted atmosphere; and the vengeance of Káli is announced to the rash peasant who would dare to ply an axe, or urge a plough, within her appropriately desolate domain. It was only with difficulty that my elephants could make their way through the jungle; and when I had reached a central position, and ascended an elevation of some 25 feet, composed of the debris of the palace, nothing but a wilderness met my eye. Yet it is barely 500 years since Simroun was a pakka, fortified city, the pride and the defence of Mithila! After the war with Nipal, Lieutenant BOILEAU, I think, surveyed these ruins, and drew up a plan of them. What is become of it, I know not; and regret that my own opportunity of research was limited to one hasty visit. In this, however, I traced the northern wall, in all its extent: measured the dimensions of the great Pókrá or reservoir called Isrá; and clambered to the top of what were once the citadel and the Ráni-bás or Mahal Saraï. On my return I had much conversation with an intelligent Brahman of Bhagwánpur, who told me that in April and May,

when the jungle is at its barest state, the form and extent of the city may be distinctly traced. From his communications, and from my own observations, I gather that the form of the city is a parallelogram, surrounded by an outer and an inner wall, the former of unburnt, the latter of burnt, brick—the one having a compass of seven cos, and the other, of about five cos.

On the eastern side, six or seven wet ditches may still be traced, outside the pakka wall, and three or four on the western side. The Isrá reservoir or tank is still perfect. It is 333 paces along each greater, and 210 along each shorter, face; and its containing walls or sides consist of the finest burnt bricks, each of which is a cubit square, and nearly a maund in weight. 50 to 60 yards of causeway, constructed of similar bricks or tiles, are yet entire in the neighbourhood of the palace; and vestiges of the same causeway, traceable at other points, indicate that all the streets of the city were of this careful and expensive structure. The remains of the palace, of the citadel, and of the temple of the tutelary goddess, exhibit finely carved stone basements, with superstructures of the same beautifully moulded and polished bricks for which the temples and palaces of the valley of Nèpal are so justly celebrated. I measured some of the basement stones, and found them each 5 feet long by $1\frac{1}{2}$ broad and deep: and yet these blocks must have been brought from a distance of 25 miles at least, and *over* the lesser range of hills; for, till you come to the second or mountainous and rocky range, no such material is to be had.

Some twenty idols, extricated from the ruins by the pious labour of a Gosain, are made of stone, and are superior in sculpture to modern specimens of the art. Many of them are much mutilated; and of those which are perfect, I had only time to observe that they bore the ordinary attributes of Puránic Brahmanism. Not a single inscription has yet been discovered: but wherefore speak of discovery where there has been no search? I noticed four or five pakka wells round, and each having a breast-work about three feet above the ground, similar precisely to the wells of this valley.

What I have called the citadel is styled on the spot the *Kotwáli Choutara*, and my palace is the *Ráni-bás*. The latter has a very central position. The *Kotwáli Choutara* is in the northern quarter; and the great tank, called *Isrá Pokrá*, is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the north-east corner of the city wall. As already mentioned, the last is still complete: the two former exist only as tumuli, some 20 to 25 feet high; and more or less coated with earth and trees.

Hindu tradition, eked out by a couple of Sanscrit slokas, copy of which I subjoin, asserts that Simroun was founded by NÁNYUPA DE'VA,

A. D. 1097; that six† of the dynasty reigned there with great splendour; and that the sixth, by name HARI SINHA DE'VA, was compelled to abandon his capital and kingdom, and take refuge in the hills A. D. 1322. The Moslem annals give 1323 for the date of the destruction of Simroun by TOGLAK SHAH. Of the accuracy of the latter date there can be no doubt; nor is the difference between the Musalmán and Hindu chronology of the least moment. But, unless NÁNYUPA had more than five successors, we cannot place the foundation of Simroun higher than about 1200 A. D. That is *clearly* too recent; and, in fact, no part of the tradition can be trusted but that vouched by the memorial verses, which only give the date of *destruction*.

Memorial verses of the founding and desertion of Simroun.

रामस्यवित्तंनलराजवित्तं पुरुरवेवित्तमलकराजः

झदात्ममुद्गत्यनिषात्यनागं श्रीनात्यदेवोनिरमात्सवर्त्तम् । १ ।

वाणाच्चियुग्मशशि सन्निभ शक्रवर्षेपोषस्य शुक्लनवमी रविसूनवारे ।

त्यक्तास्वपट्टनपुरं हरसिंहदेवो दुर्देवदेशितपथाद्यगिरिंचिवेश । २ ।—

The following is a literal translation of these memorial verses:

'The wealth accumulated by Rájás RÁMA, NALA, PURURAVA, and ALARKA, was preserved in a tank (that of Isrá), and guarded by a serpent. NÁNYUPA DE'VA destroyed the serpent; appropriated the wealth; and built (Simroun) Garh with it. (His descendant) HARI SINHA, compelled by cruel fate, abandoned his beautiful city, and went to the hills in the year of the Saka 1245.'

The kingdom of the Déva dynasty in the plains expired with the destruction or desertion of Simroun. It extended from the Kosi to the Gandak, and from the Ganges to the hills of Nèpal: at least, such were its limits in the days of its greatest splendour, when consequently it embraced *all* the several localities from which I have recently forwarded to you such signal memorials of Hindu power and science.

II.—*Further particulars of the Sárun and Tirhut Láths, and Account of two Buddha Inscriptions found, the one at Bakhra, in Tirhut, the other at Sárunáth, near Benares.* By JAMES PRINSEP, Sec. As. Soc. &c.

[Read at the Meeting of the 11th March.]

The following note, from Mr. HODGSON, (alluded to in the preceding article,) accompanied the drawings of Buddhist monuments, which had been promised to the Society in his letter, read at the meeting of the 28th May, 1834.

† 1, NANYUPA. 2, GANGA. 3, NARA SINHA. 4, RA'MA SINHA. 5, SAKTI SINHA. 6, HARI SINHA, all with the cognomen *Déva*.